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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER
ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT

Concluding observations of the Committee on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

NORWAY

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Norway on the rights covered by articles 1 to 15 of the Covenant (E/1994/104/Add.3 and HRI/CORE/1/Add.6) at its 34th, 36th and 37th meetings on 22 and 23 November 1995, and adopted* the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee expresses its satisfaction with the very comprehensive and detailed report of the State party, which follows closely the Committee's guidelines regarding the form and content of reports, as well as for the written answers to the list of issues with which it provided the Committee.

3. The Committee also wishes to express its appreciation for the frank and constructive dialogue which it has had with the delegation of Norway.

B. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant

4. The Committee finds that there are no significant factors and difficulties which prevent the effective implementation of the Covenant in Norway.

* At its 55th meeting on 6 December 1995.

C. Positive aspects

5. The Committee notes with appreciation the high level of achievement of Norway in the fulfillement of its obligations with regard to the protection of the rights guaranteed in the Covenant.

6. The Committee takes note of the statement of the delegation to the effect that a bill shall be presented by the Government to the Storting which, as a follow-up to the recently adopted article 110c of the Constitution, will incorporate the Covenant into the Norwegian legal order, together with the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

7. The Committee commends Norway for its regular participation in multilateral development cooperation programmes, as well as for the setting up of a number of bilateral programmes, thus contributing to the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights in other countries.

8. In relation to the emerging trend towards intolerance and violence against members of minority groups and foreigners, in particular asylum seekers and migrant workers, the Committee welcomes the adoption by the Ministry of Local Government and Labour of a plan of action which provides, inter alia, for the development of indicators for measuring racial discrimination and improving the collection of statistical data concerning racial violence and harassment.

9. The Committee commends the devolution of responsibility to the Sami Assembly with regard to matters relating to the preservation and development of the culture of the members of the Sami community, and notes with appreciation that the Sami language may be used in contacts with public bodies and before the courts.

10. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the policy and the specific steps taken by the Government with a view to integrating persons with disabilities into the labour market by offering them active vocational rehabilitation measures rather than passive social security benefits.

11. The Committee welcomes the Government's policies to combat unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment and unemployment among young people, through job creation and qualification schemes, and through a close cooperation with employers' and employees' organisations.

12. The Committee expresses its satisfaction with the Norwegian social security system, which ensures that all persons resident or working in Norway are insured under the National Insurance Scheme and that all residents are covered by the Family Allowance Act.

13. The Committee commends the efforts undertaken by the authorities to tackle the problem of domestic violence and child abuse, and in this respect, it welcomes the setting up of crisis-centres, crisis-telephone lines and support centres to help victims.

14. The Committee notes that, as a measure to ensure the access of everyone to health services, the Government has made it an obligation for the newly graduated doctors and dentists to serve one year in the public health institutions in certain isolated parts of Norway.

15. With regard to the protection of the health of minors, the Committee takes notes with appreciation of the policies aimed at fighting alcoholism and smoking, particularly discouraging minors to have access to alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

16. The Committee welcomes the National Geriatric Programme aimed at strengthening geriatric services throughout the country, through the

recruitment of specialised personnel and the improvement of the cooperation between hospitals and community geriatric care services.

17. The Committee welcomes the policy of integration of children with disabilities within the regular educational system as well as the results thus attained.

18. The Committee welcomes the introduction of courses relating to human rights, in particular on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, in the curricula of civics and social studies.

19. With respect to the promotion of human rights, the Committee commends the activities of the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights, such as the organisation of seminars, the teaching in universities, the conducting of research, the publishing of books and periodicals and the provision of advice and information material to the public at large, both nationally and internationally.

D. Principal subjects of concern

20. The Committee regrets the lack of statistical information gathered by the Norwegian Government with regard, in particular, to domestic violence and child abuse, situation which may hinder the efforts of the Norwegian Government to take the exact measure of these problems and thus combat them efficiently.

21. The Committee is concerned that, though it is effective in the law, the equality between men and women, especially with regard to remuneration, is not yet fully achieved in practice, and that women still experience more obstacles than men in advancing to higher professional positions.

22. The Committee expresses its concern about the provisions in the Labour Disputes Act enabling the Government, with the agreement of the Storting, to end a strike by the enactment of a bill imposing a compulsory arbitration, although the Government has only very seldom made use of this power.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

23. The Committee encourages the Government to collect statistical data on domestic violence and child abuse to identify the magnitude of these negative phenomena, and thus to ensure that the rights of the affected persons are fully protected in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant.

24. The Committee recommends that the Government intensify its efforts to ensure that equality between men and women, in particular with regard to labour matters, be effective in practice.

25. The Committee recommends that in the process of revising the Labour Disputes Act, the need to protect the right to strike be fully taken into account.